The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives a brief summary of important matters affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and such other information that will benefit the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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Strong reasons make strong actions.—Shakespeare.

WHOLE NO. 1062. WILLIAM GREEN, President WASHINGTON, D. C., SATURDAY, AUGUST 15, 1931 FRANK MORRISON, Secretary VOL. 21, NO. 23.

HAVANA RAIL STRIKE RESISTS WAGE CUTS

Havana, Cuba, Aug. 15.—Forty motormen and conductors, including the executive committee of the Street Car Workers' Union, who had been jailed by the government in connection with the present strike, were released. The government had nothing tangible against the men. They were arrested in an attempt of the government to assist the street car management in breaking the strike by arresting union officials and strike leaders.

The strike was originally called to protest against wage cuts decreed by Frank Shubert, president of the Havana Electric Railway Company. Later the Cuban labor unions declared a 24-hour general strike to manifest their support of the street car employes. The general strike tied up a large portion of business establishments.

Many restaurants offered the strikers free meals, barber shops offered hair cuts and shaves, and the omnibus companies gave free transportation to the striking workers.

An increasingly large number of accidents on account of inexperienced operators resulted in many damage suits as well as considerable damage to the company's property.

Frank Shubert, president of the company, agreed to confer with the union committee, but declared the company officials would not budge in their determination to cut wages and said the workers must accept the cuts.

The Havana Electric Railway Company is owned by American capitalists. It was organized in the United States in 1926.

STUDY OF BREAD LINES STAGED IN BALTIMORE

Baltimore, Md., Aug. 15.—Bread lines as a result of unemployment are being investigated by the bread line committee of Baltimore Council of Social Agencies.

"The present sharply accentuated economic depression has brought in its wake bread lines in most of the large cities," said Harry Greenstein, chairman of the committee. "Baltimore has been rather free of this situation. We have had a certain number of bread lines which have actually operated in Baltimore during the past year, and it is hoped that this study will bring to light all the facts with regard to them. The committee also hopes to be able to make a recommendation with regard to whether there is need in Baltimore for bread lines and, if so, when, if any, supervision should be given."

CITY JOBLESS RELIEF PREVENTS STARVATION

Philadelphia, Aug. 15.—Over 25,000 orders for food and milk were distributed to needy families in the first two weeks of its existence by the Philadelphia Bureau of Unemployment Relief. The bureau declares the issue of food and milk orders is necessary to save many from suffering and possible starvation.

The bureau finds no improvement in the unemployment situation and predicts that community relief funds will have to be very much expanded during the coming winter. The relief work of the bureau is financed by a $2,000,000 municipal bond issue.

GOVERNOR MURRAY CALLS UNEMPLOYMENT PARLEY

Oklahoma City, Okla., Aug. 15.—Governor W. H. Murray has summoned a national unemployment conference to convene at Memphis, Tenn., on August 24. The Governor stated it was understood that no question is to be discussed "except how to provide work for the unemployed, what the work shall be and where the money shall be obtained."

The Memphis conference is the outgrowth of a State-wide Oklahoma unemployment conference held here, which was attended by 2,000 delegates. The invitations included representatives of the executive of the Federal Government, Governors of all the States in the Mississippi Valley, all members of the U. S. Congress, and one or more delegates from every congressional district and every large city.

5-Day Week Demanded by A. F. of L. Executive Council; Work for Jobless or Legislative Relief Imperative; Hoover Urged to Call National Industrial Conference

Atlantic City, N. J., Aug. 12.—The Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, at its quarterly meeting here today, demanded the immediate introduction of the five-day week without reduction in standard wage rates, and, if necessary, the six-hour day to make jobs for the 6,000,000 or more unemployed, and urged President Hoover to call a national conference of representatives of industry and labor to deal with unemployment in general.

The Council condemned the owners and managers of industry for "standing impotent and helpless in the midst of all the existing distress," emphasized the necessity for a prompt increase in public works construction by federal, state, and municipal governments, urged a comprehensive system of economic planning, and insisted that if work for the jobless is not provided unemployment relief legislation will be imperative.

The text of the Council's statement follows:

"The Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor spent the entire session of today's meeting in considering the unemployment situation.

"The reports received from labor organizations were augmented by statements submitted by the individual members of the Executive Council regarding the distressing condition which prevails among the members of the different organizations and labor generally in various parts of the country with which they come in contact daily. These reports are filled with incidents of human distress and human suffering. Unemployment has increased to an astonishing degree. Many organizations are supplying their individual members with assistance either through a division of work available or through financial assessments. All are filled with apprehension over the distress and suffering which will prevail during the coming winter.

"It is the opinion of the Council that federal, state and community groups should begin immediate preparations to meet the demand for relief which will increase to an alarming degree when winter comes. It would be a reflection upon Government and upon our social order if society would stand helpless in the fact of such a national emergency.

"The Council firmly believes that local community organizations should serve as the distributing agencies for all relief supplied, but that representatives of Labor should be included in the membership of these distributing agencies. Any and all help supplied by the federal or state governments should be distributed through these local community relief organizations.

"All relief supplied in this way, however, cannot reach the cause of the distressing situation. It cannot be and it will not be a remedy for our economic ills. In supplying relief we are not dealing with the cause of our social and economic ills. We are simply attempting to supply food, clothing and shelter to those who are the victims of an economic tragedy which is approaching its third year.

"In the midst of all the existing human distress the owners and managers of industry stand impotent and helpless. They present neither leadership, plans or policies. They lack initiative and they present no remedy. Even though several national meetings have been held by these groups no plan has been suggested through which work opportunities may be equitably distributed among men and women willing and eager to work.

"In contrast with the attitude of industry and the leaders of industry the American Federation of Labor offers a concrete plan which, in its judgment, would, if applied, serve as a remedy for unemployment. In order to create work opportunities we propose that the five day work week be immediately introduced and accepted in private and government employment.

"We recommend, further, that the hours worked per day be reduced to six hours, if necessary, in order to supply work for all and that, so far as possible, work security shall be accorded to working men and women. We propose that the standard rate of pay be maintained so that the purchasing power of the masses of the people may fairly balance with their productive capacity.

"We urge that the federal, state and municipal governments inaugurate and introduce a government building and construction program which in operation will enlarge the opportunities for the unemployed to secure work. The building and construction plans of all these departments of Government should be sufficiently comprehensive to take up the slack of unemployment so that working people may become wage earners supplying their families with food and clothing out of their earnings rather than to be the recipients of charity. We further propose that a plan of stabilization of industry, of economic planning, of a thorough, definite and accurate survey of economic needs and of the actual adjustment in working time required in order to supply all with an opportunity to work, be formulated and put into effect.

"For the purpose of dealing with the unemployment situation and its serious consequences in a constructive and practical way, the Executive Council expresses the opinion that a President of the United States should assemble a national conference of representatives of Industry and Labor. Such a conference could deal with the subject in a direct way. It could do more to assist and remedy the distressing unemployment situation than legislative bodies could hope to accomplish. In fact, it does not seem that any other agency could deal with the subject except Labor and those who own, manage and control Industry.

"The owners and managers of Industry are the employers of Labor. They possess the right to employ workers or to reduce their working force. If the constant menace of an army of unemployed, numbering many millions, is to be removed, then the employers of Labor must adjust working time so that all able and willing to work may share in an equitable distribution of all work available.

"A National Conference, such as the Council recommends, should be called. It would stimulate buying power, restore confidence, overcome, in a very large degree, the psychological condition which seems to have frozen the purchasing power of millions of people. A Conference of this kind would produce a most widespread effect for good.

"It is the opinion of the Executive Council that industry and the Government must face this issue by providing work for the unemployed or have imposed upon them, through legislation, plans for unemployment relief and human sustenance.

"The cry of distress is so increasing in volume and the sympathies of the workers and their friends are becoming so aroused as to create an irresistible demand for work for all willing and able to work, an opportunity for all to earn a decent living, or relief through legislative enactment.

"The Council sums up the situation as a choice between employment, work for all willing workers, or the development of an irresistible demand for unemployment relief legislation. Industry cannot prevent unemployment relief legislation if it refuses to supply work.

"Some individual employers have met the situation by adjusting and readjusting the working time so that all employes have been accorded an equal share of work available and as a result none have been discharged. Industry collectively ought to be able to do what individual managers and owners of industry have found it possible to do. This is their obligation. This is Industry's responsibility, and the Executive Council believes the question which must be answered is, Will Industry meet its obligations, discharge its duties and assume its responsibilities.

"The Executive Council believes that it is its duty to remind Industry that its right to exist and its right to function rests upon social sanction. It cannot be unmindful of these social sanctions. Under our social order Labor is dependent upon opportunities for employment. Without work opportunities Labor is powerless to buy, and the great consuming market of the Nation is destroyed."

MAN HELD IN SHOOTING OF 3 UNION OFFICIALS

Washington, Aug. 15.—Tom Connors, 61 years of age, is reported to have been identified as the man who fired a fusillade of shots at three officials of the International Union of Operating Engineers in a restaurant here on May 21. Connors was arrested in Berwyn, Ill., a suburb of Chicago.

One of the shots hit Frank Langdon, associate editor of the union's journal. Langdon lost one eye as a result of the shot. Arthur M. Huddell, president of the union, was saved when a bullet lodged in a pocketbook in his vest, but died several days later from heart attack. Before his death, Huddell attributed the shooting to his attempts "to eliminate racketeering in our union."

Connors was arrested at the instance of the United States Department of Justice.

OIL COMPANY REVISES EMPLOYE PENSION PLAN

New York, Aug. 15.—The Standard Oil Company of New Jersey states that the company intends to revise its plans for paying annuities and insurance to its employes. Like most company-owned and operated annuity and insurance plans, employes are not consulted either in setting up the plan or in continuing it. It is one of the devices used to tie workers to the job.

Contractors on Government Work Pay Laborers 25 to 30 Cents an Hour

Washington, Aug. 15.—Charges that contractors on government wrecking and construction jobs in the District of Columbia are paying laborers less than a living wage and less than the prevailing wage rate prescribed by law are made by George J. Adams, executive secretary of the District Committee on Employment.

The investigation of wages and hours for laborers on government construction work on which Adams bases his charges was made at the request of William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor.

Adams declares that contractors pay the laborers, for the most part, 25 or 30 cents an hour and work them 9½ hours a day instead of 8. The usual rate among local builders for this class of work is 40 cents an hour.

"My personal belief is that the wages set forth in the affidavits do not represent, or even remotely approach, a fair wage, a living wage, or the prevailing wage," Adams declared.

In regard to wage cuts in general, Adams said:

"I have given the question of wage standards considerable study, and I am convinced that injury will accrue to the economic and social stability of this country if a general policy of drastic wage reduction is permitted to gain headway."

SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT ECONOMIZES IN WAGES

Vienna, Austria, Aug. 15.—The socialist municipal government of Vienna declares it is obliged to inaugurate measures of economy with regard to wages and salaries of city employes. Extra pay allowances have been cut down in order to avoid reduction in ordinary wages. The municipality says it is forced to take this step because of decrease in income from taxes and municipal enterprises.

HOUSING STUDY UNDER WAY FOR FALL PARLEY

Washington, Aug. 15. — President Hoover's conference on home building and home ownership is completing its nation-wide study of housing for the meeting of the conference which will be held in Washington next November, Secretary of Commerce Lamont and Secretary of the Interior Wilbur are joint chairmen of the conference.

The report will include problems of home financing, city planning, city slums, landscaping, and house construction, equipment and management.

A. F. OF L. APPROVES COMPERS MEMORIAL

Atlantic City, N. J., Aug. 15.—The $100,000 memorial to be erected in Washington in honor of Samuel Compers, former president of the American Federation of Labor, will be completed within a year, William Green, president of the Federation, stated at the quarterly meeting of the Executive Council here.

The monument will occupy the triangular site contributed by Congress in Washington on Massachusetts avenue and Second street, N.E., near the Capitol. The Executive Council approved the plans for the memorial as prepared by Robert Aitken, New York sculptor. The memorial has also been approved by the National Commission of Fine Arts.

UNIONS AND THE "DOLE" UNDERMINING ENGLAND

New York, Aug. 15.—Julius B. Baer, an authority on the organization and operation of commodity exchanges, returns to the United States with a very gloomy picture of present day conditions in Great Britain.

He found British unemployed workers drawing enough unemployment insurance benefits to support themselves and their families without need for private or public charity. He also found the British trade unions fairly successful in holding up against the attacks of reactionary wage cutting employers. Confronted with these two features of industrial Great Britain, Baer declared that England is at the mercy of the "dole" system and the labor unions, both of which, he said, are being much too undermine the stability and future welfare of the country. He evidently missed in England the soup kitchens and bread lines which are such common sights in New York City, where the jobless workers eke out an existence on pauper relief.

PUBLIC WORKS JOBLESS RELIEF IN CLEVELAND

Cleveland, Ohio, Aug. 15.—Public construction work for the relief of unemployment is more thoroughly endorsed in Cleveland now than when the citizens in November, 1929, voted public improvement bonds. Then it was estimated that at the worst the city would have to provide for from 10 to 15 per cent unemployment in 1930 and 1931. The present estimate is close to 30 per cent and this summer's load on private and public charities is greater than at any time since modernization of charities began.

When work under construction this year is all in motion it will provide jobs for around 20,000 persons who are now or hitherto have been supported by public charity. This is nearly done with the 10 per cent of the public works program in actual operation. There is an active campaign to force more of the authorizations into actual work.

MEXICAN LABOR CODE PROTECTS NATIVE LABOR

Mexico City, Aug. 15.—The labor code passed by the Chamber of Deputies prescribes that all labor shall be "for Mexicans in Mexico, the racialized Mexican of white race."

The code contains a clause prohibiting foreigners from serving on the board of directors of labor syndicates. It is believed the Senate will pass the Senate in its present form.

STOCKYARDS COMPANY FIGHTS PROFIT LIMIT

St. Joseph, Mo., Aug. 15.—The St. Joseph Stockyards Company filed suit to prevent the U. S. Agricultural Department from enforcing its order fixing the company's stock-handling charges.

The department, acting under a law designed to protect farmers and stockmen from unjust handling charges, limited the company's return to 7½ per cent on its investment.

Wall Street and Unemployment

The Wall Street Journal is highly incensed because William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, intimated the danger of a "revolt" of the unemployed unless the economic order is speedily reorganized on the basis of a work week short enough to give jobs to all the unemployed, now numbering over 6,000,000.

The Wall Street Journal represents the subversive type of American journalism which holds the view that wages should be reduced to maintain dividends, and that in general investors are entitled to live in luxury even though their luxury drives the workers to pounding the pavements in the army of the unemployed.

The Journal does not deny that millions of workers are idle through no fault of their own. It does not deny that these millions of jobless would be glad to earn a living if those who own and operate industry would give them the opportunity. But confronted with these incontestable facts it draws smug comfort from its belief that during the coming winter public and private charity, bread lines and soup kitchens will be so large and generous that no one will die from the lack of "food and shelter."

From the viewpoint of the Wall Street Journal, living wages when the employers can profitably employ them and soup kitchens supported by charity when the employers cannot profitably employ them are all the workers are entitled to and all they should ask. To suggest that they are justified in being grievously discontented with such an industrial status is characterized by the Journal as "excited rhetoric." A bourbon lady of the French Revolution period had a similar view. When the poor of Paris went to the King's palace at Versailles and demanded bread, this gentle lady is alleged to have said, "Let them eat cake."

Equally reactionary is the Wall Street Journal's remedy for unemployment, or, rather, its lack of a remedy. It says that unemployment results mainly from the fall in commodity prices and changes in industrial technique." It declares that "neither of these causes can be dealt with quickly."

By changes in industrial technique the Journal means the wholesale introduction of labor-displacing machinery and systems. With this new technique the workers in the manufacturing industries alone in 1929 produced 42 per cent more than in 1919. Generally speaking the employers during this period have kept the length of the working week to the six-day maximum that obtained when the workers produced 42 per cent less.

Why cannot the unemployment which is largely due to the introduction of this labor-displacing machinery be "dealt with quickly"? It can be. If business leaders so desired, the five-day week could be an established policy within thirty days, and the 6,000,000 jobless men would be at work earning a living for themselves and their families.

The will to establish the five-day week, the will to make wealth producers and family providers out of 6,000,000 jobless, would soon find the way. But the Wall Street Journal and its reactionary satellites prefer a pauperized army of 6,000,000 unemployed trudging their way through rain and sleet and snow to bread lines and soup kitchens and banks in municipal lodging houses.

War on Wage Cuts Declared by American Federation of Labor Executive Council

Atlantic City, N. J., Aug. 15.—A declaration of war on wage cuts was made by the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor at its quarterly meeting here.

The Council reaffirmed the judgment of the leaders of organized labor that wage reductions are economically unsound and said "it is the unflinching purpose of the American Federation of Labor to stand resolutely against them."

The statement was made public by William Green, president of the Federation.

The text of the Council's declaration follows:

"The Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor reiterated and reaffirmed its original position in opposition to attempted reductions in wages.

"It is firmly of the opinion that the distressing unemployment situation can be overcome only through the development of the purchasing power of the masses of the people to its maximum capacity.

"The facts are overwhelmingly in favor of the position assumed by the American Federation of Labor.

"The widespread unemployment which prevails throughout the Nation is due to a lack of buying power upon the part of the masses of the people.

"The purchasing power of more than 6,000,000 wage earners has been totally destroyed because they have been forced into unemployment.

"There must be added to this large number many millions more who are working part time only and who are dependent upon these unemployed and part-time workers.

"The many millions of dollars which have thus been lost will never be retrieved.

"The amount of goods this vast army could have bought and consumed if they could have been maintained in reasonably steady employment would have prevented a continuation of the distressing situation which now exists.

"In the light of these economic facts it is amazing to observe the statements of some who propose a further impairment of the purchasing power of the limited number of workers now employed through the imposition of reduction in wages.

"Unemployment will continue just as long as the purchasing power of the masses of the people rests below and beneath the ability to produce manufactured goods.

"Obviously, the consuming market, which is very largely made up of the masses of the people, must absorb manufactured products and manufactured commodities in a volume corresponding with the production facilities of industry.

"This can only be accomplished when the consuming power of this great purchasing market corresponds with the productivity and efficiency of industry.

"Low wages mean unemployment, human distress, and human suffering.

"The present unemployment situation will never be relieved until wages are built up so that men and women can buy and consume.

"The Executive Council commends very highly those employers and owners of industry who have subscribed to the high-wage philosophy enunciated by the American Federation of Labor, and who during this depression have steadfastly discharged their obligation and kept the promise made to the President of the United States to maintain the wage structure.

"On the other hand, the Council condemns, in a most vigorous way, the action of those employers who have taken advantage of human distress and human suffering to impose and force wage reductions in spite of the protest of the workers involved, as well as those who represent them.

"It is the unflinching purpose of the American Federation of Labor to stand resolutely against reductions in wages.

"We are sure of our position.

"We are confident that in assuming this attitude we are contributing toward the highest and best interests of all the people, and through such action we are serving as best we can to bring about a restoration of normal conditions at the earliest possible moment."

Hoover Dam Workers Strike for Higher Wages and Better Working Conditions

Las Vegas, Nev., Aug. 15.—Over 1,400 men working on the Hoover Dam struck on the Boulder Canyon Project. The contract contained no provisions relative to wages or labor conditions. It is an anti-union job.

Frank Crowe, superintendent of Six Companies, refused to consider the demands of the strikers. He said the wage increase alone would cost $2,000,000 or $3,000,000 during the seven years of contract, and that Six Companies would not stand any such diminution of its profits. To show that he meant business, he stopped construction work indefinitely.

Crowe said that labor agencies in Las Vegas had assured him they could fill the places of the strikers with men who were eager to work at the low wages and working conditions against which the employes struck.

The strike began when 125 tunnel workers struck against a wage cut of from $6 to $4 a day. Later the 1,300 others joined them.

JOBLESS IN BELGIUM

Brussels, Belgium, Aug. 15.—Insured unemployed workers in Belgium at the end of June numbered 67,642, or 8.9 per cent of the total insured, which compares with 7.9 at the end of May and 1.3 at the end of June, 1930.